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THE MONASTERIES (BAHĀ AND BAHĪ) OF PATAN

A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE CULTURAL TOPOGRAPHY OF A NEWAR TOWN

NIELS GUTSCHOW AND HEMRAJ SHAKYA

This contribution does not aim at providing an understanding of the historical growth process of Patan. The history of Patan is as obscure as that of any other Newar town. It is only now that we have started drawing conclusions from details of urban ritualism¹, implying that certain notions of space could be utilised as evidence which until now was of interest to an anthropologist only.

With processions² as well as the underlying concept of the town plan of Patan - the four stūpas (New. *thudo*) "guarding" the cardinal points of the compass³ have been dealt with recently. It might therefore suffice to recall that nothing is known about the age of the stūpas - their outer appearance providing no hint whatsoever at dating them earlier than the 16th century. Analysing the map of Patan, however, we come to some conclusions concerning the growth pattern of the town. An early phase of development is characterised by a diagonal road still leading from Nugah in southeast to Tapahiti in northwest. The road follows the contour lines high above the banks of the Bagmatī (see fig. 1). The same type of spatial organisation characterizes the latest phase of development : a diagonal road leads from Nakabahī to Patan Dhokā, providing a direct link to Kathmandu.

Following the early stage of development for which stands the diagonal road linking several small hamlets, we come across an oriented street-crossing. The elements of this street-crossing point towards Konti (north) with the Kumbheśvara/Sarveśvara and towards Thati (south) with Matsyendranāth as well as Balkumārī in the east and Puco in the west. It was the impact of this street-crossing which characterized further development and from which a grid-like street pattern emerged. It may be noted that the crossing deviates by 24 degrees exactly from the north. No explanation has been found so far for this deviation.

We assume that it is only during the third stage that the present day street-crossing, oriented towards the four stupas, came to dominate the basic pattern of the town. Although we are not in a position to locate the early palaces (*darbar*) of Patan, we see a developing centre located in the southeastern sector right at the intersection of the street-crossing towards the end of the 16th century.

We are inclined to believe that the basic change in pattern, i.e. the significant shift from the first to the second street-crossing, one block to the east and south, occurred around the beginning of this millennium.

It is, however, the reign of Siddhi Narasimha (1618-1658, Nepal samvat 738-778) we would like to concentrate on with the following remarks. Under Siddhi Narasimha, Patan reached an early height of cultural development in comparison with Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. The king institutionalized a hierarchic order of the existing monasteries and the new ones built during his rule. A chronicle (*vamśāvalī*) tells us of an extension⁴ of Patan and of a translocation of an existing bāhā for the purpose of extending the palace.⁵

Moreover, we have an account⁶ mentioning a lot of temples in altogether 37 localities (Nep. *ṭol*) of Patan. All this leads us to assume that the basic pattern of Patan had already fully developed in the middle of the 17th century.

Let us now talk about the pattern of distribution of monasteries (*mahā-vihāra*) and branch monasteries (*vihāra*) which so well determine the cultural, social as well as spatial pattern of Patan.

Today we can count altogether 156 monasteries. Of these, 148 are located in Patan proper and the remaining eight in villages (Capagāum No. 41, Bāregāum No. 154, Cobhār No. 39 and No. 156, Pharpin No. 151, Bumgamati No. 42, and Kirtipur No. 40 and No. 155 - the numbers referring to fig. 2) which belonged to the former domain of the Kingdom of Patan during the reign of the later Malla Kings (16th - 18th centuries). The two monasteries of the western suburb Pūco are counted under Patan proper. It should be noted that it was Siddhi Narasimha's plan to extend Patan up to Pūco.⁷

Of the 156 monasteries, 18 are still counted as the main ones (*mahāvihāra* or *bāhā*; mapped in fig. 2 with full names) whereas 32 are secondary monasteries (*mahāvihāra* or *bāhī*; mapped in fig. 2 with circles around numbers). The remaining ones are branch monasteries (*vihāra* or *kacabāhā*).

The main difference between the monasteries is centred on the right of initiation. The 18 main *bāhās* have the right to initiate *Vajrācārya* - the highest caste group among the Buddhist population, usually referred to as priests - as well as *Sākyā*. The 32 *bahīs*, however, have the sole right to initiate *Sākyā*. The branch monasteries do not have any right of initiation.

The striking information the chronicle provides is the order of hierarchy and precedence, which was kept nearly unchanged until now.⁸ Only 12 of the 18 *bāhās* of today existed when Siddhi Narasimha set the rules for the election of the heads (*nāyke*) of the *bāhā* and the order of precedence. Among these, *Yacchubāhā* (No. 130), *Subāhā* (No. 138), *Cūkabāhā* (No. 36), *Ukubāhā* (No. 2) and *Gujibāhā* (No. 17) had a head who presided over the chiefs of these five *bāhās*. It should be noted that all these *bāhās* are located in the southeast of the town.

The newly established *bāhās* were named as *Ombāhā* (No. 124), *Jyobāhā* (No. 127) and *Dhumbāhā* (No. 110), all located in the northeastern sector of the town. Of those *bāhās* in the villages *Cobāhā* (No. 39) in *Cobhar* and *Kyapūbāhā* (No. 40) in *Kirtipur* were counted among the 18 main *bāhās*. The chronicle thus counts 17 *bāhās* as the leading ones. *Sibāhā* (No. 74) was established only after the rules were set by Siddhi Narasimha. It was thus left to the succeeding kings to provide the right of initiation to *Sibāhā*.

Yet the order of the 15 *bāhās* is still observed in the performance of certain rituals. Picture 5 shows 150 "ajus" (eldermen) being offered the "five offerings" (*pañcadān*) by a certain Siddhirāj *Sākyā* of *Nagbāhā* in the courtyard of *Akibāhā* on the occasion of a family event. Each of the 15 *bāhās* sends 10 ajus to take part in that ritual. Thus we see that although the right of initiation was given to two *bāhās* outside the town as well as to the one that was later established, certain activities were confined to those 15 *bāhās* which existed during the reign of Siddhi Narasimha.

Among the most spectacular spatial manipulations we have to consider the translocation of the *Hāhbāhā* from the present side of the palace towards the quarter of *Gābāhā*. Even now a special ritual reminds us of that manipulation thus providing an idea of how precarious the transformation of a given ritual infrastructure must have been. Legend has it that the *Hāhbāhā* was founded at the site of a rivulet. When fire was seen above that rivulet it was taken as an auspicious sign to build a monastery. Fire and water are symbols of worlds above and below earth, thus defining a sacred place of communication between this world and

that of the gods.⁹

Even now, during the month of Gunla - the holy month of the Buddhists, corresponding to August of the Gregorian calendar - a massive square-shaped copper vessel, embellished with a Buddha image, is placed right in front of the main entrance of mulcok, the most important place within the palace. This vessel seems to aim at reconciling history. Space had been transformed - yet preceding conditions seem to convey certain qualities of space. In a way we have to believe that a given spatial order is ritually unchangeable. Therefore, if any change, i.e.. any manipulation changing a religious environment, takes place, a ritual is needed for reconciliation with the gods or powers concerned.

Of the former 148 monasteries only a few are now in good state and very few still function as a monastery, the most active of them being Kvā-bāhā (No. 104). Some bāhās are hardly traceable like Kontibāhā (No. 106) and Kanibāhā (No. 149). Some bāhās have preserved only the Buddha shrine (Kinubāhā, No. 43; Jyāṭhabāhā, No. 14) whereas others - like Ubāhāgathica (No. 2), Ukubāhālā (No. 1), Bubāhā (No. 60), Gabāhā (No. 59) or Kvābāhā (No. 104) - still play an active role in the ritual life of Patan. Some bāhās have been converted into predominantly Hindu shrines, leaving no trace of the former monastery, e.g. Sikabahī (No. 153), the place of which is now occupied by the pīṭha of Cāmuṇḍā, one of the eight mother goddesses (*Aṣṭamatrīkā*) of Patan.

NOTES

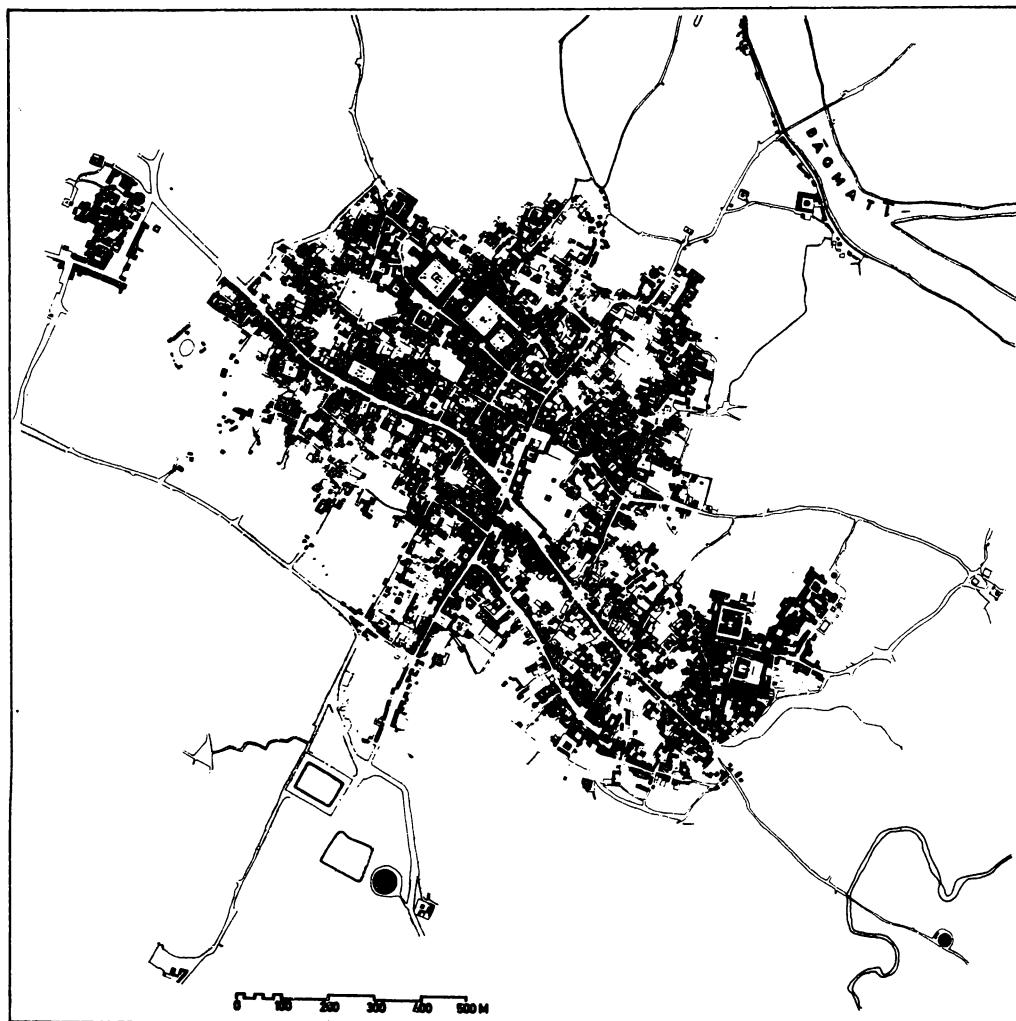
This paper is part of an extensive survey of the Newar towns of the Kathmandu valley, which was made possible by a grant of the GERMAN RESEARCH COUNCIL. The former monasteries of Patan were traced in March 1974. This paper aims at nothing more than providing dates. A historical view of the topography of Patan is still missing. The transcription of the list was made with the help of Mr. Thakurlal Manandhar and Dr. Michael Witzel. Thanks to their encouragement the manuscript was finished in December 1977.

- 1) see as a case study · GUTSCHOW, N. and KÖLVER, B. : *Ordered space - Concepts and Functions in a town of Nepal*. Nepal Research Centre Publications, No. 1, Wiesbaden 1975.
- 2) GUTSCHOW, N. : *Prozessionen in Pātan*; in : *Storia della Città*, No. 4, Milano 1977, p. 31-44.
- 3) WIESNER, Ullrich : *Zur Frage der sogenannten Aśoka-Stūpas in Patan, Nepal*; in : *Zur Kunstgeschichte Asiens - 50 Jahre Lehre und Forschung an der Universität Köln*, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 189-198.
- 4) HASRAT, B.J. : *History of Nepal - As Told by its Own and Contemporary Chroniclers*. Hashiarpur 1970.
- 5) WRIGHT, D. : *History of Nepal*. Cambridge 1977, p. 234.
- 6) KUNU SHARMA : *Kīrtīpataka. Pātan* 2018 (1961).
- 7) see note 4
- 8) WRIGHT, op. cit., p. 234-235.
- 9) For cosmic religion see IRWIN's enlightened article on the Aśoka pillars : IRWIN, John : *Aśokan Pillars : a Reassessment of the Evidence, Part IV : Symbolism*; in : *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. CXVIII, Nov. 1976, p. 734-753.

LOCATION NAMES

<i>chem</i>	- house	<i>hiṭi</i>	- fountain
<i>nani</i>	- courtyard	<i>gallī</i>	- lane
<i>cuka</i>	- courtyard	<i>tahdham</i>	- big
<i>libī</i>	- courtyard	<i>cīdhām</i>	- small
<i>dune</i>	- inside (the house)	<i>tvā</i>	- quarter
<i>dusa</i>			

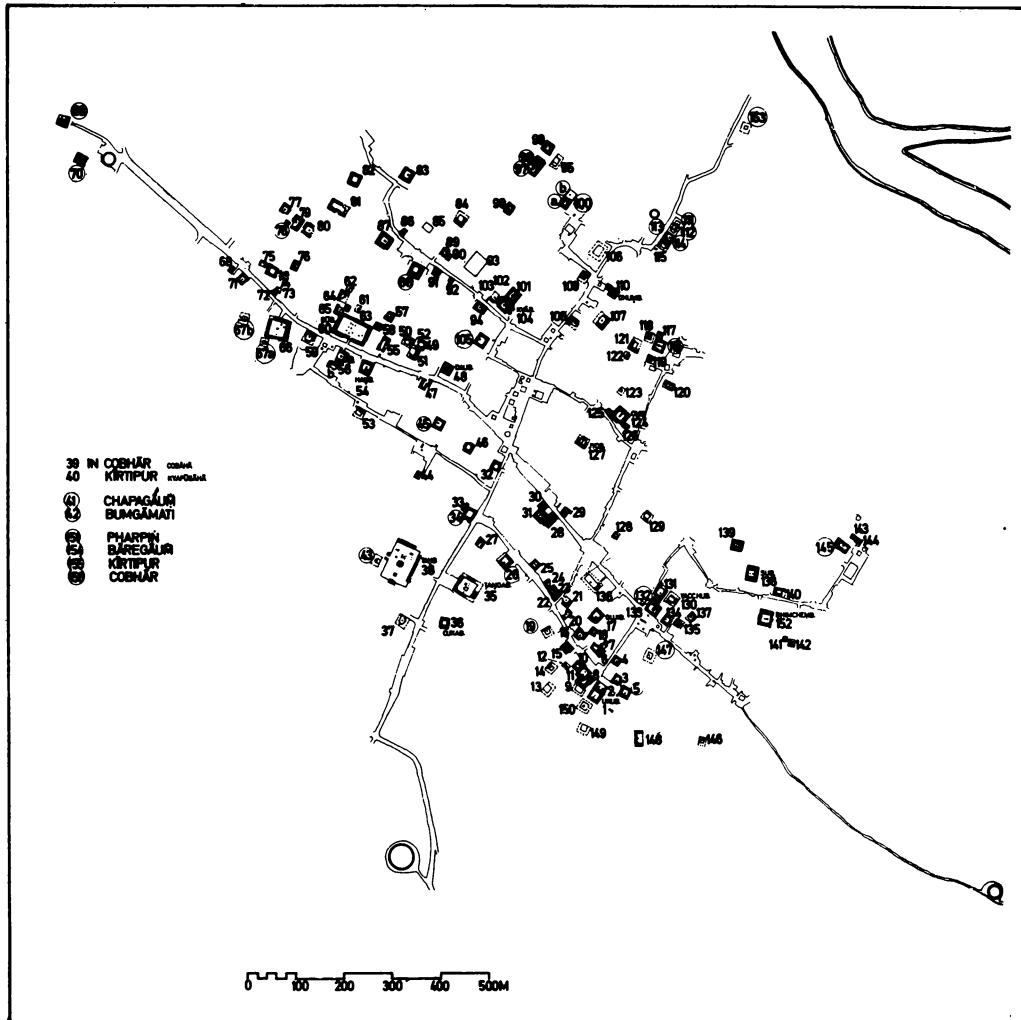
FIGURES AND PLATES



1

PĀTAN

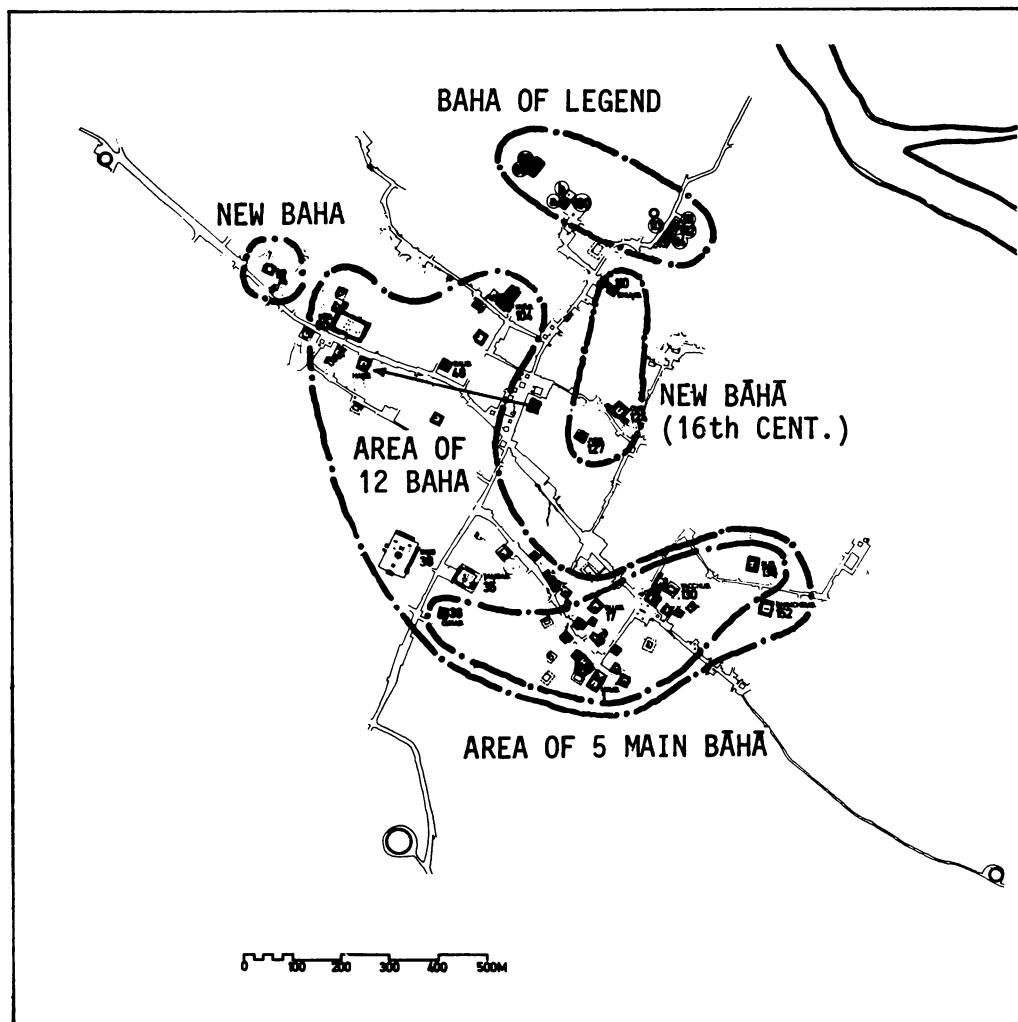
Built up area in 1970. A street cross (18 degrees difference from the right angle), defined by 4 stūpas underlies the town-plan. The square (Thyakabaha 4 by 4 m) or rectangular (Bubaha 60 by 34 m) courtyards of the monasteries fit very well into the grid-like pattern of the streets.



2

PĀTAN

Of the 156 listed monasteries of the former domain of Pātan 146 are situated in Pātan proper,² in the western suburb of Pūco (nep. Pulcok) and 8 in villages west and south of the town.



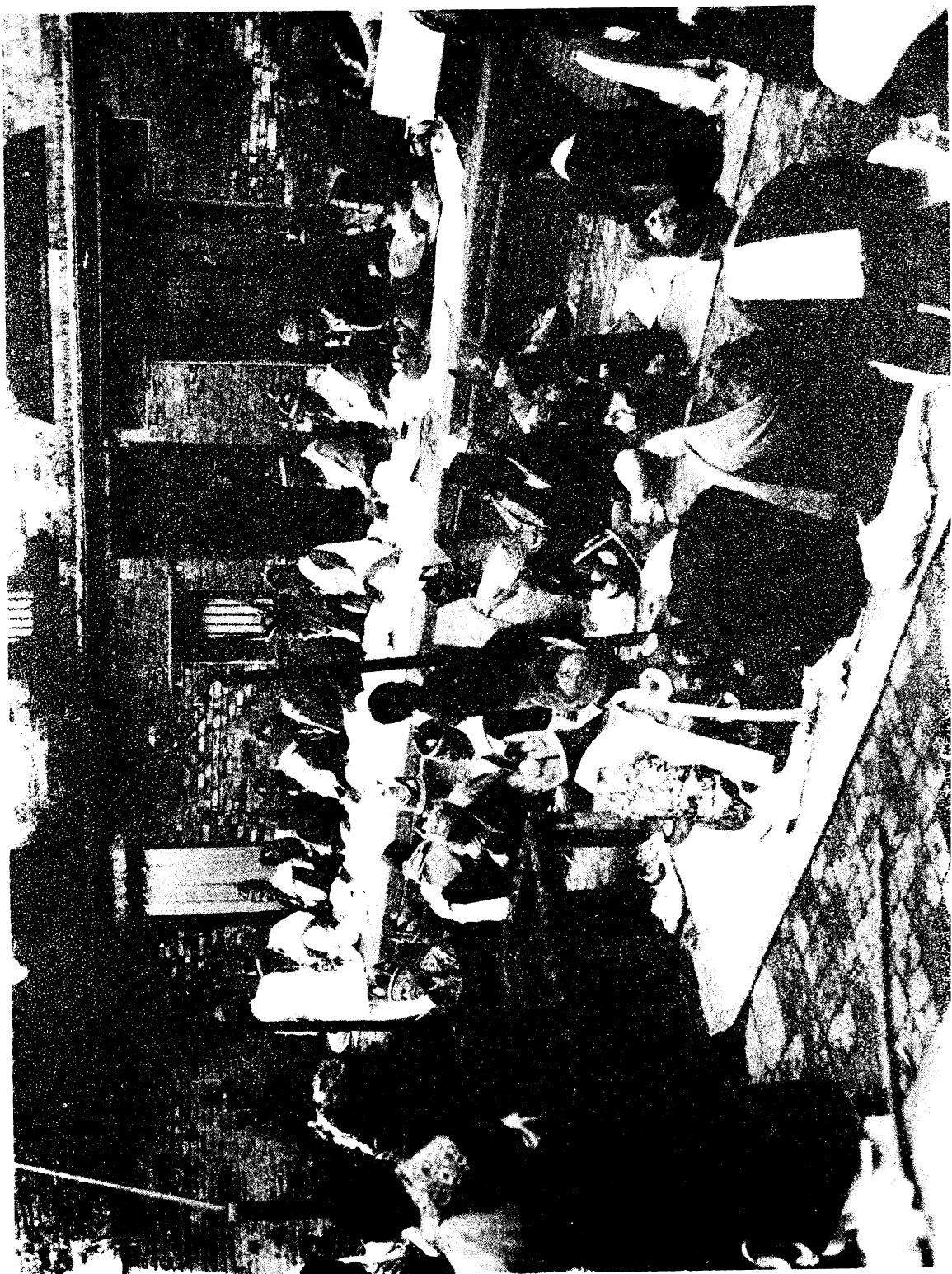
3

PĀTAN

Not much is known about the historical topography of Pātan. During the reign of Siddhi Narasimha however 12 existing and 4 newly founded monasteries (*mahāvihāra*) were cited. A transfer was done (*Hābhāhā*) to enable the king to enlarge his palace.

4. Patan : Air view of Ikhālakhū, the main square of one of the 24 quarters (Nep. *tol*, New. *tvā*) of Patan at the intersection of two streets parallel to the street-crossing which underlies the town-plan. Around the square with its Bhairava, Ganeś and Jagannāth temple as well





LIST OF THE MONASTERIES

List of the 156 *bāhās* of Patan and the domain of Patan. The 18 main *bāhās* are italicized in full length, whereas the 32 *bahīs* are only partially italicized (*mahāvihāra*). The other 106 *bāhās* are so-called kacabāhās or branch monasteries (*vihāra*).

Two of the 18 main *bāhās* and six of the 32 *bahīs* are located outside Patan proper within neighbouring villages.

SANSKRIT-NAME	NEWARI-NAME
1. <i>Omkuliśrī Rudravarṇamahāvihāra</i>	<i>Ukubāhāla</i>
2. <i>Khaṇḍacukavihāra</i>	<i>Ubahāgathica</i>
3. <i>Pūrnacandravihāra</i>	<i>Dunebahā</i>
4. <i>Jayativarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Jatibāhā</i>
5. <i>Omkulimahāvihāra</i>	<i>Ubahābahi</i>
6. <i>Bodhimāṇḍapavihāra</i>	<i>Mahabaudha</i>
7. <i>Dhanavajravihāra</i>	<i>Ghanāndabāhā</i>
8. <i>Hiranyaśalabhavihāra</i>	<i>Bhājudhanabāhā</i>
9. <i>Ratnalābhavihāra</i>	<i>Bhimarājabāhā</i>
10. <i>Rūpavartnavihāra</i>	<i>Nagubāhā</i>
11. <i>Ikṣavihāra</i>	<i>Ichembāhā</i>
12. <i>Dhanavīrasimhavihāra</i>	<i>Dhanabāhā</i>
13. <i>Vasuvarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Basubāhā</i>
14. <i>Padmavarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Jyāṭhabāhā</i>
15. <i>Dinavarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Hiṭiphusabāhā</i>
16. <i>Amṛtavarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Takabāhā</i>
17. <i>Vaiṣṇavarṇamahāvihāra</i>	<i>Gujibāhā</i>
18. <i>Bhaṭkaravarṇavihāra</i>	<i>Siddhibāhā</i>
19. <i>Sthavīrapātramahāvihāra</i>	<i>Thapābahi</i>
20. <i>Samantebhadravihāra</i>	<i>Pālubāhā</i>
21. <i>Simhacukavihāra</i>	<i>Sikucabāhā</i>
22. <i>Kuṭasimhavihāra</i>	<i>Kutubāhā</i>
23. <i>Jayaśrīvihāra</i>	<i>Jothābāhā</i>
24. <i>Kulacaityakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Kuladevbāhā</i>
25. <i>Devadattavihāra</i>	<i>Naudhabāhā</i>
26. <i>Jyeṣṭhavarṇamahāvihāra</i>	<i>Jyābāhābahi</i>
27. <i>Cakrakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Khvākhanabāhā</i>
28. <i>Dharmakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Harṣabāhā</i>
29. <i>Bhājumanakīrtivihāra</i>	<i>Gvamgaḥbāhā</i>
30. <i>Triratnasimhavihāra</i>	<i>Triratnasimbāhā</i>
31. <i>Dhanavīrakuṭagāravihāra</i>	<i>Dhanadeobāhā</i>
32. <i>Hatigalavihāra</i>	<i>Haugabāhā</i>

33. Bhājudhanasimhavihāra	Ibabahīdune
34. Rājāśrīmahāvihāra	Ibabahī
35. Jyeṣṭhavarṇamahāvihāra	Taṅgahābhā
36. Cakravarṇamahāvihāra	Cūkabāhā
37. Thatināmavihāra	Thatibāhā
38. Dharmakīrtimahāvihāra	Tahābhā
39. Kaśchapaśagirimahāvihāra	Cobāhā (in Cobhār near Kirtipur)
40. Jagatpālamahāvihāra	Kyupubāhā (in Kirtipur)
41. Perakhāmahāvihāra	Wabahī (in Cāpagāum)
42. Amarāvatīmahāvihāra	Bumgabahī (in Bungamati)
43. Lokakīrtimahāvihāra	Kinubahī
44. Ikanāmavihāra	Ikabāhā
45. Suraśandramahāvihāra	Nhaykambahī
46. Jaganmāṃgahāvihāra	Jombāhā
47. Dharmakīrtivihāra	Bhelkubāhā
48. Dattanāmamahāvihāra	Daubāhā
49. Yokulīvihāra	Yokubāhā
50. Vṛṣarājavihāra	Briṣrajabāhā
51. Jagajjyotirvihāra	Jogadhusabāhā
52. Yokulivihāra	Kakubāhā
53. Jyenavihāra	Jyānabāhā
54. Ratnākaramahāvihāra	Haḥbāhā
55. Udayadevavihāra	Wanabāhā
56. Yantāvihāra	Walabāhā
57. Navavihāra	Nhubāhā
58. Bhairavasimhavihāra	Bhaiłasimbāhā
59. Gādavihāra	Gabāhā
60. Yaśodharamahāvihāra	Bubāhā
61. Sukhāvatīvihāra	Bhājupatibāhā
62. Devajotivihāra	Namdayabubāhā
63. Devarājavihāra	Devarājabubāhā
64. Ikunāmavihara	Ikubaha
65. Padmāvatīvihāra	Nahbāhā
66. Padmāvatīyekulivihāra	Nahbahākulām
67. (a) Kāmukanāmamahāvihāra	Khvayabahī
67. (b) Kāmukanāmamahāvihāra	Khvayabahī
68. Kanakadattavihāra	Natvabāhā
69. Rakṣeśvarīmahāvihāra	Pūcobahī
70. Silapuradāṇagirimahāvihāra	Cvepucobahī
71. Koṭṭavihāra	Kvaṭhabāhā
72. Cāngalavihāra	Cāngalabāhā
73. Dharmakīrtivihāra	Dharmakīrtibāhā
74. Srīvatsamahāvihāra	Sibāhā

75.	Srīvatsadundubhivihāra	Sijabahā
76.	Kanakavarṇavihāra	Kanakabahā
77.	Chvācavihāra	Chayabahā
78.	Chvācavihāra	Cidhamguchayabahī
79.	Cakramuktavihāra	Ganeśabahā
80.	Mūlaśrīvihāra	Mubahā
81.	Cukhāvihāra	Dudubahā
82.	Suprekṣaṇavihāra	Mikhābahā
83.	Hemapurīvihāra	Yetabahā
84.	Ataskirtivihāra	Akibahā
85.	Bhaśkaravarṇavihāra	Nyākhācuka
86.	Bhājubalavihāra	Unacubhājubalabahā
87.	Srīvatsavihāra	Athabahā
88.	Lokakīrtimahāvihāra	Nakabahī
89.	Mativihāra	Matibahā
90.	Govindasimhavihāra	Matibahācukacā
91.	Jyotivarṇavihāra	Khāchembahā
92.	Ratnajyotivihāra	Thyākābahā
93.	Paśuvarṇavihāra	Ilanhedilkō
94.	Navavihāra	Nhubahā
95.	Yokhāchemvihāra	Yokhāchembahā
96.	Suvarṇavihāra	Ikhachembahā
97.	Nāpicandramahāvihāra	Duntubahī
98.	Gopicandramahāvihāra	Pintabahī
99.	Ānandavihāra	Ānandabahā
100.	(a) Lalitavanamahāvihāra	Cidham Kontibahī
100.	(b) Lalitavanamahāvihāra	Tahdharī Kontibahī
101.	Vagīśvaravihāra	Sasunani
102.	Micchuvihāra	Ilāmnani
103.	Dvārikāvihāra	Ilāmnani
104.	Hirānyavarṇamahāvihāra	Kvābahā
105.	Maṇimāṇḍapamahāvihāra	Dhaugābahī
106.	Śamkhādharaśaktivihāra	Kontibahā
107.	Kulimavihāra	Kulimabahā
108.	Svam̄thavihāra	Svam̄thabahā
109.	Itumvihāra	Kobahā
110.	Gunālakṣmīkīrtimahāvihāra	Dhumbahā
111.	Yampimahāvihāra	Ībahī
112.	Yampiyantamahāvihāra	Ībahī
113.	Yampiyantamahāvihāra	Ībahī
114.	Yampiyantamahāvihāra	Ībahī
115.	Karuṇācukavihāra	Karunācuka
116.	Saptapuramahāvihāra	Cikambahī

117.	Maṇikuṭavīhāra	Burmavaidyabāhā
118.	Triratnavīravihāra	Triratnabāhā
119.	Bhaiṣajyarājavīhāra	Bhaiṣajyabāhā
120.	Hodolanāmavīhāra	Honabāhā
121.	Kularatnavīhāra	Kularatnabāhā
122.	Yantavīhāra	Yantabāhā
123.	Lakṣadhanavīhāra	Lakhyadhaṇcuka
124.	Vajrakīrtimahāvīhāra	Om̄bāhā
125.	Sūryavatrvīhāra	Jagatamunibāhā
126.	Dharmakīrtivīhāra	Lakhedhambāhā
127.	Jetavarṇamahāvīhāra	Jyobāhā
128.	Suvarṇākhyavīhāra	Suṇbāhā
129.	Yaṅgraugrānamavīhāra	Yanmubāhā
130.	Balādharauguptamahāvīhāra	Yacchubāhā
131.	Amṛtavarnāvīhāra	Nhubāhā
132.	Amṛtavarnamahāvīhāra	Dathubahi
133.	Mitravarnāvīhāra	Tvāyabāhā
134.	Hendupativīhāra	Bhimdyobāhā
135.	Layanacaityabimbavīhāra	Henubāhā
136.	Ratnajayavīhāra	Sagabāhā
137.	Jayamāngalavīhāra	Tanabāhā
138.	Jayamanoharamahāvīhāra	Subāhā
139.	Thakūṁvīhāra	Thakūṁbāhā
140.	Jñānacandravīhāra	Pinchembāhā
141.	Pilāchemvīhāra	Pilāchembāhā
142.	Bhimacandravīhāra	Pilāchembāhā
143.	Padmotsrīmāhāvīhāra	Guīṭabahī (Dathubahī)
144.	Basucaśīlamahāvīhāra	Guīṭabahī (Taḥdhambahī)
145.	Gustalamahāvīhāra	Guīṭabahī (Cidhambahī)
146.	Pandavavīhāra	Lukhusibāhā
147.	Itirājamahāvīhāra	Ilayabahī
148.	Yogālāmkhyavīhāra	Yaṅgabāhā
149.	Kanakavarṇavīhāra	Kanibāhā
150.	Yantāribīvīhāra	Yetālibī
151.	Gaganākṣaramahāvīhāra	Phampībāhā (in Pharpin)
152.	Mayūravarṇamahāvīhāra	Bhinchembāhā
153.		Siṭabahī
154.		Bāregāumbahī (in Bāregāum)
155.		Kyupubahī (in Kirtipur)
156.		Cobabahī (in Cobhār)